

## Get your Employer Brand into Shape

Contributed by Charlene Haines  
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In the past, traditional recruitment was sufficient until skills shortages, Employment Equity regulation and changing target markets became a very real threat and employers suddenly realised that their company had to become the brand – the Employer Brand, in order to compete for talent.

Traditional recruitment just didn't hack it anymore&hellip;

It became more and more obvious that a new era of Recruitment was dawning! Today's recruitment climate requires serious marketing muscle. Recruitment Marketing Specialists are the heavyweights in attracting talent, administering responses and building the Employer Brand, leveraging knowledge of target markets and media, as well as effective usage of innovative technology. They bring a breath of fresh air to many Employers of Choice in a complex recruiting environment.

Yet, some Employers still hang on to the hopes that traditional recruitment will be the answer, fearing the unknown that Recruitment Marketing and Response Management represents. Understandably companies are used to only paying when a placement is made, but the long-term reality is that Employers have very little control with traditional recruitment, their recruitment fee's being used to build the recruiter database, with no attention to building the Employer Brand.

Companies are used to gaining customer loyalty for their brands resulting in increased profits and success through market differentiation. An employer brand needs the same attention to compete effectively in the labour market and drive employee loyalty through effective recruitment. What one must consider, however, is the lack of employer branding knowledge within Human Resources, and what affect this has on the overall company image as an employer in the short and long term. Fiona Arenhold, Managing Director of Integration Resourcing, a Recruitment Marketing and Response Management specialist organisation, has been involved with Response Management since it was introduced to South Africa in the early 1990's. She shares her insight on how this move to a more strategic approach is growing in momentum and what recruitment marketing trends she envisages for 2009.

"Many of our clients have made the business decision to utilise response management exclusively. Clients with eRecruitment Technology are using their careers page on their websites more and more as a forum to display their positions and value proposition. We assist them in driving talent through online and print advertising by consulting on media usage, target markets and communication and finally managing the response.

The employer's focus is on a definable return on investment, bringing the control in-house and building their brand. Let's face it, the fee structure is also highly conducive to effective budgeting, as clients can employ many employees for one set price. Granted they have media costs, but these costs are seen as part of the recruitment and marketing budget and we are able to provide campaign strategies within their budget." "The trends for 2009 that I foresee are that other employers will start to follow the trendsetters, as media attention in 2008 has really drawn the conclusion that Human Resources and Recruitment need to become more strategic. Even more so in South Africa as the brain drain and skills crisis increases. Employers will be looking for new options and even more creative ways of recruiting as the standard classified advert or print display advertisement may not always work.

Budget constraints will become more prevalent, forcing HR Departments to relook their recruitment spend and adopt options with guaranteed cost-effectiveness and return on investment. Another continued trend is the move towards online advertising, in line with the quantity of time spent by target markets on the internet. I believe that 2009 is going to be a tough year and that cost is going to be a defining issue. There will have to be results from spend incurred." "A thought to ponder is whether Employers are able to distinguish between a recruiter and a recruitment marketing specialist? Fiona says, "Recruitment Marketing Specialists will be able to provide you with campaign strategies that are suited to growing your Employer Brand and have an accurate understanding of target markets, demographics and media. As a professional service provider, employers should really spend time talking to specialists in this field, as 2009 is going to be the year where strategy is going to play a large role in defining who attracts top talent and who doesn't."

The knowledge of employer branding and the respective marketing strategies surrounding this will define successes moving forward. Gone are the days where human resources operated on its own. HR, Marketing Departments and Recruitment Marketers need to collaborate to produce results. Recruitment Marketers are on the ground and they know target markets, they know the media, they know what works. Employer Branding, although still a mystery to some, is something that must be taken as seriously as marketing the company products.

Fiona says, "Employer Branding is still really not fully understood by many Human Resource and Marketing Departments. It is not merely about a careers page and recruitment ads. We find that often we need to educate clients

from both departments about Employer Branding and doors are certainly opening more and more as reality sets in that leading companies are leveraging their knowledge and getting the results. It should be thought of as an investment, and not a cost. In fact, a priority in the 'war for talent' is 'The repercussions if you are not marketing your employer brand is that you won't get the best staff. Companies need to move beyond what they are doing currently and market their accolades, their unique differentiating factors. If a company has incredible maternity benefits or spends 25% of their profit on training why are they not telling the public about this?

Companies must take the responsibility to educate the public and focus on building their employer image. Nowadays it is as important in a recruitment advertisement to allocate up to 50% of your space selling your company as an Employer of Choice – the job intricacies can be expanded upon in a preferred online space. Companies really need to talk about themselves more; This is what differentiates one employer from the next in a skills short economy. Coupled with advertising spend is the administration behind the scene. This process forms part of your branding – candidates are really put off by an unstructured or drawn out recruitment process. 'A lot of employers prefer outsourced response management specialists to handle volume recruitment as they just cannot afford to get it wrong,' Fiona says. The bottom line is that Recruitment Marketers are going to have to pave the way in this new Era of Recruitment where skills shortages, brain drain and Employment Equity Regulation acts as very real stumbling blocks to organisational success. There is a very real talent shortage and companies need to be clever to attract top talent.

Employers need to look at themselves and how they are representing themselves in the market place, how they treat their staff, what benefits they offer and the work environment. Should you wish to understand the full scope of Employer Branding and how to make it work for you through the media, please don't hesitate to contact Fiona Arenhold on 021 689 5180 for a free consultative meeting.

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